

I. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Duties

Incumbent serves as an Animal Health Technician (AHT) for Animal Care within assigned counties and/or states. He/she is responsible for technical and nonprofessional specialized work encompassing a variety of inspection duties as related to the Animal Welfare Act. Typical duties of the Animal Care AHT include the following:

- assists Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) in the preparation and maintenance of a current and complete list of establishments that are required to be inspected.

- performs inspections of animal dealers and exhibitors who have applied for a license under the Animal Welfare Act; conducts routine inspections of licensed dealers and licensed or registered exhibitors; makes reinspection visit if necessary, to ensure corrections were made to deficiencies found during previous inspection.

- is responsible for assuring all requirements of the Animal Welfare Act are met and, if not, documents the deficiencies. Typical standards the AHT needs to be familiar with and to be inspected would include: structural strength, water and electric, storage of food and bedding, waste disposal, heating and temperature, ventilation, lighting, drainage, interior surfaces, shelter, space requirements, feeding, watering, sanitation, cleaning, housekeeping, pest control, handling of animals, transportation, and record keeping.

In evaluating adherence of specific technical requirements for these factors the technician must, above all, be cognizant of the overall health and well-being of the animals at the inspected facilities. This includes the identification of common disease symptoms and any indications of broad health problems at the facility. When there are indications of serious problems of this nature, the technician promptly notifies the supervisor or sector veterinarian for more in-depth follow-up action.

- as instructed, investigates complaints within the time frame allowed; responds to leads or requests made by Sector Supervisor, or field VMO; visits animal markets, sales, etc. to observe activities and keeps alert for unlicensed dealers, exhibitors, etc.; completes required inspection report and submits with other related material to VMO and/or Sector Supervisor.

- instructs animal dealers and exhibitors on the proper procedures in the humane care, handling, and transportation of animals covered under the Animal Welfare Act.

- works with assigned establishments to attain their compliance with the Animal Welfare Act; meets with and advises facility officials as to their responsibilities; notifies supervisor promptly in all cases where controversy is likely.

- as requested, represents the Sector at meetings of industry and other concerned public and private groups and individuals to promote the Animal Welfare program; identifies areas where policies are not understood by affected groups and calls these to the attention of field VMO and/or Sector Supervisor.

In addition to the preceding duties, the AHT may be called upon to assist Veterinary Services. Typical activities would include the following:

- serve on an emergency disease eradication task force which has responsibility for instituting immediate quarantines, diagnostic controls, and eradication measures to effectively localize the epidemic.

- inspect livestock markets, trucks and other vehicles, and abattoirs primarily for the effectiveness of disease prevention and control procedures and to ensure program requirements are being met.

B. Responsibility for the Work of Others:

May be assigned to train and oversee the work of lower grade animal health technicians as assigned.

Factor 1 - Knowledge Required

Must be knowledgeable of physical and behavioral characteristics of various species of common animals. Must be knowledgeable of common animal disease and have the ability to identify disease symptoms and symptoms of health problems such as malnutrition, presence of parasites, etc. Must be knowledgeable of proper physical handling of animals and be able to identify signs of improper handling and neglect.

Must have a detailed knowledge of the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act dealing with specific requirements of the physical treatment of animals, including sanitation, lighting, space requirements, etc.

Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls

Incumbent is under the general administrative and technical supervision of the sector supervisor. Additional supervision is provided by one or more field veterinarians. Work assignments are typically made on a weekly basis. Employee independently completes inspections in accordance

with established procedures. Reports on inspections are submitted to the sector office, or to a field VMO for final review.

A field VMO or supervisor outlines objectives and describes procedures to be followed on new or non-repetitive assignments. When difficult technical issues or problems arise, the incumbent is expected to seek advice of a field veterinarian or supervisor. When particularly serious or controversial violations and/or problems are encountered, higher level professional personnel are promptly notified.

Work is reviewed for adherence to policies, instructions, and precedents and compliance with the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act. Work is checked mostly by review of inspection reports and related materials submitted to the Sector office.

Factor 3 - Guidelines

The primary guidelines are the numerous, detailed provisions of the Animal Welfare Act. These are supplemented by established agency policy and operating procedures. Substantial judgment and experience are required to apply and interpret these guidelines. Significant matters not covered by established criteria are referred to a field VMO or Sector Supervisor for interpretation.

Factor 4 - Complexity

The duties involve a series of related but highly varied tasks involving the protection of animals. There is considerable variation in the nature and scope of facilities inspected. The considerable variety of species at the inspected facilities also complicates the job. Sound judgment is essential in the citing of violations and related follow-up action and includes deciding the extent to which facility managers are making a good-faith compliance effort, and deciding when problems are sufficiently severe to require the intervention of a veterinarian.

Factor 5 - Scope and Effect

Work performed by incumbent of this position plays a very significant role in the protection of animals covered by the Animal Welfare Act. Decision-making includes unreviewed decisions that facilities are in compliance with the Act and, in some cases, that previously identified violations have been corrected. The incumbent's identification and referral to higher level officials of major animal care problems plays an essential role in the agency's handling of difficult, controversial issues with high public visibility and significant impact on business operations.

Factor 6 - Personal Contacts

Contacts are with agency veterinarians, animal dealers, exhibitors, and employees of inspected facilities, as well as members of humane groups and officials of local government agencies.

Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts

Contacts involve conducting inspections and related coordination matters including the correction of deficiencies; explaining the basic provisions of the Animal Welfare Act to interested groups and individuals, as well as local government officials; and coordination of work efforts with other agency employees.

A lack of cooperation and varying degrees of hostility are often encountered in inspections. Groups with which the employee meets are often skeptical and in a state of agitation concerning perceived animal care problems. The employee must therefore have excellent communication skills, including the ability to convince and win the support of others.

Factor 8 - Physical Demands

The work involves inspections of facilities of dealers and exhibitors. Moderate physical effort is required. Cautious movement in and around animal pens and cages is necessary to defend against physical attack by large and/or confused animals.

Factor 9 - Work Environment

There is exposure to contagious, infectious, or communicable diseases while working around animals covered by the Animal Welfare Act. This includes examination of highly distressed animals at exhibitor and dealer facilities. The work requires some special clothing and gear including rubber boots, long medical coats, sanitized garments, gloves, masks, gowns, and so forth.